

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 3278

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: GREENLAND NATIONAL COUNCIL LAYS CLAIM TO UNDERGROUND

RESOURCES

REF: COPENHAGEN 3069 DTG 201331Z OCT 75

SUMMARY: THE GREENLAND NATIONAL COUNCIL UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED
ON OCTOBER 28 A DECLARATION TO THE EFFECT THAT THE UNDERGROUND
RESOURCES IN GREENLAND BELONG TO THE POPULATION IN GREENLAND RATHER
THAN TO THE DANISH STATE. THIS DECLARATION IS MERELY A
STATEMENT OF DESIRE AS THE DANISH PARLIAMENT IS THE ONLY
COMPETENT ORGAN TO MODIFY THE MINING LAW OF 1965 WHICH
GIVES THE DANISH STATE CONTROL OVER GREENLANDIC MINERAL
RESOURCES. THE FACT THAT IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED,
HOWEVER, IS EVIDENCE THAT SUJUMUT, THE POLITICAL MOVEMENT
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OF YOUNG RADICALS IN GREENLAND, HAS GREATER INFLUENCE

THAN THE DANISH GOVERNMENT EXPECTED. CONTROL OF MINERAL RESOURCES WILL BE A MAJOR PROBLEM IN THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GREENLAND AND METROPOLITAN DENMARK CURRENTLY BEING EXPLORED IN THE JOINT GREENLAND HOME RULE COMMISSION.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE 17-MEMBER GREENLAND NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING IN GODTHAAB OCTOBER 28 UNANIMOUSLY ENDORSED A DECLARATION SUBMITTED BY ODAQ OLSEN, CHAIRMAN OF THE GREENLAND WORKERS ASSOCIATION (GAS), STATING THAT ALL SUBSOIL RESOURCES IN GREENLAND BELONG TO THE LOCAL INHABITANTS RATHER THAN THE "DANISH STATE". THE DECLARATION REFLECTS THE POSITION OF THE YOUNG RADICAL MOVEMENT, CALLED SUJUMUT, WHICH HAS COALESCED DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS IN GREENLAND. LED BY THE FORMER GREENLANDIC MEMBER OF THE DANISH FOLKETING, MOSES OLSEN, AND THE INCUMBENT MP, LARS EMIL JOHANSEN, THE SUJUMUT MOVEMENT WON NEARLY 50 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN THE JANUARY 9 FOLKETING ELECTION AND THE SUBSEQUENT ELECTION FOR THE GREENLAND NATIONAL COUNCIL. THE NATIONAL COUNCIL IS NOW DIVIDED ALMOST EVENLY, WITH THE SWING VOTE RESIDING IN THE CONSERVATIVE, PRO-DANISH CHAIRMAN, LARS CHEMNITZ.

2. THE OCTOBER 28 DECLARATION HAS NO CONSTITUTIONAL EFFECT. THE SUBSOIL RESOURCES OF GREENLAND SPECIFICALLY "BELONG TO THE DANISH STATE". ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 1 OF THE MINING ACT OF 1965, WHICH CAN ONLY BE MODIFIED BY ACTION OF THE DANISH FOLKETING. NEVERTHELESS, THE UNAMIMOUS BACKING FOR THIS POSITION BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL WILL COMPLICATE THE PROBLEM IN THE FORTHCOMING DELIBERATIONS OF THE JOINT GREENLAND HOME RULE COMMISSION. THAT 15-MEMBER BODY HAS JUST BEEN GIVEN THE MANDATE TO PREPARE A BASIC HOME RULE LAW UNDER WHICH THE GREENLANDERS CAN GRADUALLY ACQUIRE INCREASED CONTROL OVER THEIR OWN AFFAIRS (SEE RFTEL).

3. THIS ISSUE HAS LONG BEEN A DELICATE ONE. THE RECENT REPORT ON HOME RULE PREPARED BY THE GREENLANDIC COMMISSION APPOINTED IN 1973 RECOMMENDED THAT THE CONTROL OF UNDER-GROUND RESOURCES SHOULD BELONG TO THE LOCAL GREENLAND AUTHORITIES, BUT THIS RECOMMENDATION WAS CAREFULLY
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CONDITIONED. THAT REPORT, MOREOVER, ADMITTED THAT SINCE THIS MATTER INVOLVED A NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATIVE, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS WHOSE CONSEQUENCES WERE VERY DIFFICULT TO FORESEE, IT SHOULD BE STUDIED FURTHER. A SEPARATE MINERALS COMMITTEE, SET UP BY THE MINISTER FOR GREENLAND, JORGENSEN PEDER HANSEN, IS NOW ENGAGED IN THAT DETAILED STUDY.

4. THE DANISH GOVERNMENT, OF COURSE, HAS NO INTENTION OF RELINQUISHING ITS RIGHTS TO THE EXPLOITATION OF THESE RESOURCES. AT A RECENT LUNCH WITH THE DCM AND THE REPORTING OFFICER, THE MINISTER FOR GREENLAND SAID THAT HE WAS CONVINCED THAT SOME COMPROMISE COULD BE ACHIEVED. TO SUPPORT THIS CONTENTION, HE MENTIONED THAT LARS EMIL JOHANSEN HAD TOLD HIM PRIVATELY THAT, IF THE GREENLANDERS WERE GIVEN CONTROL, SOME FORMULA FOR DIVIDING THE PROFITS FROM MINERAL EXPLOITATION BETWEEN GREENLAND AND DENMARK COULD BE WORKED OUT. THIS WOULD, OF COURSE, NOT BE SATISFACTORY TO THE DANES WHO INTEND TO KEEP ULTIMATE CONTROL IN ORDER TO BE COMPENSATED FOR THEIR MANY YEARS OF SUBSIDIES TO THE GREENLAND POPULATION, BUT IT DID INDICATE TO HANSEN THAT THE SUJUMUT LEADERS WERE RATIONAL ON THE ISSUE.

5. COMMENT: THE DANISH GOVERNMENT IS CLEARLY WORRIED OVER THE STRENGTH OF THE SUJUMUT MOVEMENT AS SHOWN BY THE ADOPTION OF THIS DECLARATION. UNDOUBTEDLY, CONTROL OF NATURAL RESOURCES WILL BE THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE IN THE WORK FACING THE NEWLY-APPOINTED GREENLAND HOME RULE COMMISSION. THE SUJUMUT MOVEMENT CAN BE EXPECTED TO EXPLOIT THIS ISSUE TO WIN A STRONG POLITICAL POSITION IN LOCAL AFFAIRS DURING THE COMING 3-1/2 YEARS (BEFORE THE HOME RULE DEADLINE DATE OF APRIL 1, 1979 AND BEFORE THE NEXT ELECTIONS ARE DUE TO BE HELD.

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